



# SEQUOIA & KINGS CANYON NATIONAL PARKS

SEQUOIA NATIONAL FOREST/GIANT SEQUOIA NATIONAL MONUMENT

## SUMMER 2004 GUIDE

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## Updates on parking & planning

### NEW SHERMAN TREE PARKING

Parking and access for the General Sherman Tree may change late this summer. Then, to see the world's largest tree, you will drive up the Wolverton Road and signs will direct you to the new parking area and restroom just outside the sequoia grove. From there take a new trail down to the tree.

If you ever got stuck in the small old parking lot, the large new one will relieve you. If you know that these giant trees drop huge limbs unexpectedly, you'll feel safer parking out from under them. If you came to see sequoias undamaged by asphalt and erosion, you'll enjoy the view.

This change will achieve two important goals: liberating the roots of the world's most famous sequoias from the pounding of traffic *and* improving visitor experiences.

Once they've completed the new parking area and trail, crews will close much of the old access near the base of the Sherman Tree. They'll build new accessible trails. Handicapped parking and a shuttle stop will shift to the side of the Generals Highway closest to the tree (no more dodging traffic to get to the biggest sequoia). The old restroom and its failing sewage system will be replaced.

This part of the work, which will continue into the fall, will cause traffic delays. Unfortunately, there will be no accessible parking during this phase. The results, however, will improve both accessibility and traffic flow.

### SEE THE DRAFT GMP!

What's a GMP? It's a critical planning tool. The General Management Plan provides direction and vision for managing these parks over the next 15 to 20 years. The draft version is now available for public comment.

From input gathered over the past seven years of internal and public discussions, the GMP identifies four alternative scenarios for the future of these parks. They describe varying degrees of accommodating visitation while protecting park resources. From these four alternatives came a fifth



Look for the new parking lot for the Sherman Tree to open later this year. ©NPS

one – the Preferred Alternative. This synthesis represents the judgment of park managers as the best course to follow.

The GMP also includes a management plan for the sections of rivers in the parks that are part of the National Wild and Scenic River System. In addition to those, portions of the South Fork of the San Joaquin and the five forks of the Kaweah River were evaluated for "wild and scenic" consideration. All but the North Fork of the Kaweah were found to be eligible.

The plan also includes the results of wilderness studies on three areas. Found suitable for wilderness were Chimney Rock and the Mineral King area (except for the road corridor and present development). These areas will undergo a public study process that could lead to wilderness recommendations for Congress to consider. Dillonwood, a once-logged sequoia grove, was found "not suitable" for wilderness on account of its many roads and other developments.

The GMP is linked to an environmental impact statement (EIS). The EIS assesses impacts of the alternatives on natural and cultural resources, wild and scenic rivers, wilderness, transportation, visitor experiences, private inholdings, special-use permits in the parks, park management and operations, and the socioeconomic environment.

You can see the draft GMP on the web (<http://www.nps.gov/seki>, then click on "Management Docs"). To get a copy on CD call 303-969-2280. Paper copies are in many local libraries.

This summer, public meetings in the park, Three Rivers, Visalia, Fresno, Bishop, San Francisco, and Los Angeles give opportunities to comment in person. Comments will be accepted through August 5th; please address them to the Superintendent, Sequoia & Kings Canyon National Parks, Three Rivers, CA 93271. We cannot consider anonymous comments.

All comments will be reviewed and the plan revised to reflect them. The final version should be issued some time next year!